DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 271 784 CS 209 946

AUTHOR Kalupa, Frank B.; Sievers, C. Gay
TITLE Public Relations Licensure: Practitioner and Educator Attitudes.
PUB DATE Aug 86
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (69th, Norman, OK, August 3-6, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; *Certification; *Communication Research; *Federal Regulation; Higher Education; Journalism Education; *Public Relations; Questionnaires; Surveys

ABSTRACT

Two surveys were conducted to determine the attitudes of public relations practitioners and educators regarding whether public relations practitioners should be licensed. Questionnaires were mailed to public relations practitioners to obtain data for the first survey, and a second survey was mailed several months later to public relations educators. Data revealed that only 2.9% of the practitioner respondents felt that public relations practitioners should be licensed by the government. In addition, 81% of the educators surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of government licensure of public relations practitioners. Thirty-two references are provided. (DF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED271784

PUBLIC RELATIONS LICENSURE:

PRACTITIONER AND EDUCATOR ATTITUDES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

by

Frank B. Kalupa

and

C. Gay Sievers

School of Communication
University of Alabama

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Frank B. Kalupa

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Public Relations Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Norman, Oklahoma
August 3-6, 1986

CS 209 946

PUBLIC RELATIONS LICENSURE: PRACTITIONER AND EDUCATOR ATTITUDES

Frank B. Kalupa and C. Gay Sievers
School of Communication
University of Alabama

ABSTRACT

Recently increased interest in professional status for public relations practitioners has brought with it renewed discussion of the pros and cons of licensing, a frequently debated, persistent and unresolved question that was fostered in the 1930s by Edward L. Bernays, considered by many to be the "father of public relations."

This paper reports the results of two surveys designed to broadly determine the attitudes of both public relations practitioners and educators. Mail questionnaires, including seven Likert-type items on licensing and accreditation were administered to a sample of 400 members of the Public Relations Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators in the Fall of 1984. A second survey was mailed early in 1985 to 210 United States and Canadian members of the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the PRSA Educators Section and the IABC Educators Academy.

A review of existing professional literature suggests that both educators and practitioners hold adamant and highly polarized views on the perceived benefits and problems of licensure and related professional accreditation and certification. Nevertheless, curiously little opinion research has been conducted among the more than 20,000 members of PRSA and IABC. A survey of a sample of 63 members of AEJMC's Public Relations Division was conducted in 1978. A majority of the respondents in that survey (mostly educators) opposed licensing of public relations practitioners.

In the current study, only 2.9 percent of the practitioner respondents agreed with the key statement: Public relations practitioners should be licensed by the government. None of the respondents strongly agreed. The majority (86.5 percent) disagreed (32.9 percent) or strongly disagreed (53.6 percent). Educator respondents also indicated strong opposition to the key question. Eighty-one percent of the educators disagreed (20.7 percent) or strongly disagreed (60.3 percent) with the idea of government licensure of public relations practitioners.

Public Relations Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Norman, Oklahoma
August 3-6, 1986

Licensing, like the broader issue of professionalism in which it is encompassed, is a frequently debated, persistent and unresolved question that has been the subject of debate throughout the careers of today's public relations practitioners and educators. In general, opinions appear to be strongly held and highly polarized.

In the United States there are "more than 2,000 professions and occupations that require federal, state or local licenses, certificates or permits" (Angel, 1970). Although public relations is, of course, not included among these 2,000, the present increase in calls for professional status for public relations includes a renewal of the decades-old debate on the pros and cons of licensure and related issues, including accreditation or certification.

Proponents of Licensing

The idea of public relations licensing was fostered in the 1930s by Edward L. Bernays, now a nonagenerian who remains adamant in his conviction (PR Reporter, 1985, p.2; PR News, 1983.) His latest effort is a joint venture with four colleagues who formed the Public Relations Committee for Licensing and Registration to seek state licensing of practitioners (PR Reporter, 1985). His argument, reported in a 1985 reprint of a 1977 article, stated:

> Anyone can hang out a shingle and call him or herself a public relations expert without having the skills, aptitudes, education, experience, and integrity to practice.
>
> ...The principal voluntary association of public relations practitioners in the U.S. gives accreditation to members who qualify in examinations. But voluntary accreditation does not go far enough in protecting the public or profession. It carries no sanctions, economic or otherwise, for transgression of the code. Such accreditation does not prevent the accredited member who transgresses from carrying on his pursuit. Nor does voluntary accreditation protect the honorable

> practitioner from a non-association member who calls himself a public relations expert, though incompetent and unethical.
>
> In addition, the public today has no clear-cut definition of what a public relations expert does or is. This is obviously not the case with medical doctors and lawyers whose activities are defined by the state.
>
> Society has solved this problem with other vocations, in a manner that serves the interest of the public and the vocation. The solution lies in state registration and licensing. Under the law, the state appoints a board of examiners from the profession. The board defines the professional standards required and sets up examinations to qualify those entitled to call themselves medical doctors, lawyers, certified public accountants ....The board supervises and directs the process of accreditation. If the practitioner deviates from the prescribed standard of conduct, he or she is subject to economic sanctions, such as disbarment through judicial process.

Another forceful proponent of licensing is Allen H. Center, who wrote in 1984: "The calling should grab licensing anytime it is available. Why? Because licensing says that there is something you do that has importance" ("Credentials," p. 14). He concluded:

> Damnit, I think I can do at least as much good, or evil, in my field of endeavor, with my education, experience, and skills, as barbers and undertakers do in their professions. So, I want a shingle, signed by at least a mayor or a governor.

Writing in the same Public Relations Quarterly "symposium in print" on the question of the credentials of public relations, John Bitter stated:

> As much as I dislike the idea of regulation of our craft, without some sort of licensing the field will become glutted with hacks and amateurs who see it as a glamour profession that requires only a superficial knowledge of news release writing and a strong desire to "meet people" ("Credentials," 1984, p. 11).

Scott M. Cutlip has also argued for "state licensure if public relations is to get rid of the incompetents and corner-cutters now parading under its somewhat tarnished banner" (PR Reporter, 1985).

Denny Griswold concluded: "My own feeling is that licensing of PR would seem to be inevitable. I arrive at that conclusion fully aware of the inherent drawbacks of this procedure" ("Credentials," 1984, p. 17). She added:

> With licensing in effect, the nemesis of eliminating entry into the field by the untrained and the incompet[illegible] would be removed; PR employers, the public, and the profession would be protected; malpractice and unethical performance could be readily identified with ensuing revocation of the license, or economic sanctions, uniformity and identity by title would become possible and the use of euphemisms to define the function would be eradicated; and PR would automatically be endowed with an aura of professionalism.

Opponents of Licensing

No fewer in number, conviction and forceful argumentation are those who oppose licensing of public relations practitioners.

A summary of the opposing view was provided by J. Handly Wright. Originally appearing in the PR Reporter in 1977 and also reprinted in 1985, his "Argument Against Licensing of Public Relations Practitioners" listed 13 objections, including his opinion that:

> It is virtually impossible to define public relations in such a way as to devise a meaningful law. So much of what public relations practitioners do is based on judgment and analysis.
>
> Most of the unqualified and unscrupulous against whom licensing would be a protection are already calling themselves public relations practitioners and probably would be eligible for licensing under the grandfather clause.
>
> Too much emphasis is apt to be placed on academic training in considering who should be granted a license. However, only the rudiments of public relations can be learned in academic classrooms. The most valuable quality a practitioner offers his clients is experience and judgment based on experience.
>
> Licensing is seen by some as an infringement of constitutional rights guaranteed in the First Amendment.
>
> Accreditation (without licensing) is the answer and all the Society's efforts should go into the promotion of accreditation.

Philip Lesly (1979) concluded that "the idea of licensing has been around for many years and should have remained dormant .... The problems are not serious enough for the field to ask for its own enslavement" (p. 109).

John F. Budd maintained:

> The stature of public relations will rise as the relevance of its contributions increases and not, I'm afraid, by the introduction of artificial validations .... I think the suggested analogies to physicians and attorneys are much overdrawn ("Credentials," 1984, p. 13).

Pierre Werka argued, "Premature promotion of licensing could very well result in a worsening situation." He added: "There are too many roadblocks right now to achieving the sort of licensing to accomplish what all of us would undoubtedly embrace as an end result" (1975, p. 24).

Edward Block, in a 1983 interview with PR News, said: "There's wide argument that the less government regulation of business, the better. Licensing is unnecessary and impractical and would be costly."

The Public Relations Society of America's Task Force on Stature and Role of Public Relations concluded in its 1981 report:

> Seeking government regulation at a time when all private segments of society are clamoring to loosen the bonds of regulations is patently unsound. Public relations people are being called on to help the communications media forestall growing inroads by government into freedom of expression. For public relations at the same time to ask for government incursion into its ability to communicate freely, would be inconsistent and potentially suicidal. Some public relations people help organizations forestall incursion by government into their operation. Licensing would provide a means for government to purge such practitioners. To turn control of the field over to any governmental body is no more to be recommended than giving government such control over newspapers, magazines, books, or movies (p. 27).

A frequently proposed alternative to licensure is accreditation or certification, particularly a more extensive and improved version of what is currently in existence for public relations practitioners through PRSA and IABC. As Scott Cutlip pointed out: "The efforts by PRSA and IABC to promote their accreditation programs deserve applause and encouragement. But it must be noted that these programs influence only a small portion of today's some 100,000 practitioners" ("Credentials," 1984, p. 15). Of 13,000 PRSA members, 22.9 percent are accredited and only 3 percent of the 12,000 IABC members are accredited.

Like most issues within the continuing debate on public relations professionalism, accreditation has articulate spokespersons on both sides.

William Schechter has suggested that the accredited public relations designation (APR) "is meaningless." His explanation: "In the 25 years I've been in the business I have never once heard accreditation mentioned by anyone as being pertinent or meaningful--not by PR personnel, clients in the field, management, or recruiting firms" ("Credentials," 1984, p. 21). Donald R. Stephenson offered a similar argument:

> Even if a credible system of licensing, certification or accreditation is established comparable to professions like law or engineering, public perceptions of PR practitioners wouldn't change much. Nor would the opinions of the bosses or clients either. It's the latter's opinion that matters, not the public's ("Credentials," 1984, p. 24).

Writing in support of accreditation, John Bailey, former president of IABC, said:

> A strong, respected certification program, with periodic recertification requirements, eventually could help change the public perception of public relations and its practitioners. In other words, if we had one strong certification -- I like that word better than accreditation -- program supported by IABC, CPRS, PRSA, IPRA, and the other organizations, we could go a long way toward self-regulation of the profession (1984, p. 11).

Although supporting accreditation, Kerryn King argued for more than the present "one-shot-for-all-time" system. He noted, "Accreditation should be earned, not once, but year after year. Continuing education credits, pragmatically offered and applied, could serve as incentive to continually upgrade the skills and abilities of the practitioner ("Credentials," 1984, p. 18).

Previous Research

Even this abbreviated summary of selected individuals' comments suggests a need for, among other clarifications, systematic research into what public relations practitioners and educators think about licensure and accreditation, yet little research has been conducted in recent years.

The most comprehensive previous licensing study was Frank A. Tennant's 1978 survey of the Association for Education in Journalism Public Relations Division members. Conducted under the auspices of the division's Professional Freedom and Responsibility Committee, the survey was mailed to 161 members (mostly educators) and a total of 63 of the questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 39 percent.

The majority, 69.8 percent, of the 63 members surveyed in 1978 opposed licensing of public relations practitioners. However, of

those against licensing, 77.3 percent believed a need existed to monitor public relations practices to achieve professionalism.

Tennant reported: "Professionalism was the most frequently mentioned reasons for favoring licensing. More than two-thirds who favored licensing said it would be a step towards achieving and enforcing professionalism, while more than one-third said it would set standards for professionalism and identify professional preparations" (p. 40).

Almost half of those opposed believed licensing of practitioners would be unconstitutional because of its "infringement on First Amendment rights" (p. 38). Other reasons for opposition were: "governmental control of and interference with business (bureaucracy); professionalism cannot be legislated; licensing does not insure high standards; ... licensing is not necessary for professionalism; public relations practices are too diverse and complex; there are a variety of activities involved; and public relations is a creative activity, thus not lending itself to licensing" (p. 38).

Tennant found that 27 percent of the respondents (17) favored the licensing of practitioners. Of these in favor, 94 percent felt a federal (11.8 percent) or state (82.3 percent) governmental agency should license public relations (p. 39).

Earlier, a PR Reporter subscriber survey found that 44 percent of the 350 respondents favored licensing, compared to 31 percent in 1967. The newsletter stated: "A majority of respondents from the South favored licensing and close to half those in the Midwest do, too. Florida respondents voted only 31 percent for licensing despite considerable agitation for it in that state.

Dallas/Houston came through with 89 percent 'Yes' vote among PR directors" (Berger, Tisdall, Clark & Lesly, 1974, p. 1).

Recently, PR Reporter noted that 55 percent of 500 conferees who chose to take the six-minute computer opinion survey set up by the Communications Technology Task Force at the 1985 PRSA national conference "believe it is important that public relations practitioners be licensed" (1985, p. 1).

Current Research

This paper reports the results of two surveys which were designed to broadly establish the views of both public relations practitioners, members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and public relations educators, members of the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the PRSA Educators Section and the IABC Educators Academy.

Practitioner Survey

The survey of public relations practitioners was conducted in the Fall of 1984.[1] The population sample for this study was randomly drawn from the 1984 directories of PRSA and IABC. Within each directory a systematic sample was selected.

---

[1] The authors wish to thank Leslie S. Hammonds, a 1985 master's degree recipient at the University of Georgia, and now a public affairs representative with Amoco in Houston, Texas, for conducting the survey research for this portion of the study.

This research was exploratory in nature. As Babbie explained: "Much of social research is conducted to explore a topic, to provide a beginning familiarity with that topic. This purpose is typical when a researcher is examining a new interest or when the subject is itself relatively new and unstudied" (1983, p. 74).

Another purpose of this study is descriptive in nature. "The epitome of the descriptive study is the presentation of an array of data whose whole purpose is the empirical presentation of some phenomenon at one or more points in time" (Stempel and Westley, 1981, p. 169). The observations made in the questionnaire were done to describe the respondents attitudes toward licensure without attempting to manipulate the respondents. There were no hypotheses to be tested. Therefore, this research represents a descriptive study rather than one of experimental design.

The mail questionnaire also contained a number of sections concerning professional development in the field of public relations.

Part Three of the questionnaire dealt with licensing and accreditation of public relations practitioners. The first seven items in this section made statements concerning licensing and accreditation and respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement. The next item in this section asked the respondents who should license public relations practitioners, the federal government, state government, a professional organization or other.

Part Four of the questionnaire sought information about the respondent's career level, educational background, professional activities, and other demographics.

Educator Survey

The educator study was conducted early in 1985. The population sample for this study was the United States and Canadian membership of the three educator organizations. A selective sample of approximately 50 percent of the more than 400 members resulted in a survey of 210 educators. The sample was selected to eliminate as much as possible those members who were not full time public relations educators and to provide a sample that was geographically dispersed. The survey was restricted to approximately 50 percent of the memberships because of financial considerations.

Like the previously described practitioner survey, the questionnaire contained additional sections dealing with professional development in public relations.

Part Four of the educators' questionnaire included seven Likert-type questions which were identical to those used in the previous study. An eighth question asked respondents to indicate their preference for who should conduct licensing.

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of six demographic and related questions.

Results:

Practitioner Survey

Four hundred questionnaires were mailed to Public Relations Society of America and International Association of Business Communicators members. Eleven of the questionnaires were returned as undeliverable, resulting in a usable sample of 389. Of these, 143 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 36.8 percent (Hammonds, 1985, pp. 70-74).

Respondents were given seven statements for which they were asked to mark their answers on a five-point Likert-type scale which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. (Refer to Table 1)

The first statement in this section read as follows: Public relations practitioners should be licensed by the government. None of the respondents marked strongly agree for this statement. A total of 2.9 percent of respondents answered undecided (10.7 percent). The majority (86.5 percent) disagreed (32.9 percent) or strongly disagreed (53.6 percent).

The second statement in this section was: Licensing of public relations practitioners is inevitable. Again, none of the respondents chose the strongly agree answer. Only 6.4 percent of respondents agreed and 17.9 percent were undecided. The majority (75.7 percent) of the respondents either disagreed (46.4 percent) or strongly disagreed (29.3 percent) that licensing of public relations practitioners is inevitable.

An alternative form of certification of public relations would be preferable to government licensure. For the statement, 29.0 percent strongly agreed and 48.6 percent agreed. A total of 77.6 percent of respondents preferred an alternative form of certification to government licensure. Thirteen percent were undecided. Only 3.6 percent disagreed and 5.8 percent strongly disagreed.

Only 8.6 percent of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, professional accreditation of public relations practitioners should be mandatory, while 21.4 percent agreed. A total of 29.3 percent disagreed and 18.6 percent strongly

TABLE 1
PUBLIC RELATIONS LICENSURE:

PRACTITIONERS' AND EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES

	(1) Strongly Agree %	(2) Agree %	(3) Undecided %	(4) Disagree %	(5) Strongly Disagree %
1. Practitioners should be licensed by the government:					
Practitioners	0	2.9	10.7	32.9	53.6
Educators	5	8.3	5.8	20.7	60.3
2. Licensing of practitioners is inevitable:					
Practitioners	0	6.4	17.9	46.4	29.3
Educators	4.1	5.0	17.4	30.6	43.0
3. An alternative form of certification would be preferable to government licensure:					
Practitioners	29.0	48.6	13.0	3.6	5.8
Educators	37.3	36.4	11.9	6.8	7.6
4. Professional accreditation of practitioners should be mandatory:					
Practitioners	8.6	21.4	22.1	29.3	18.6
Educators	14.9	18.2	17.4	23.1	26.4
5. Certification is essential to the professional development of the field:					
Practitioners	13.6	32.1	20.7	25.7	7.9
Educators	20.7	21.5	15.7	26.4	15.7
6. Certification is essential as a protection of the public interest:					
Practitioners	8.5	18.4	28.4	31.9	12.8
Educators	17.4	20.7	13.2	28.9	19.8
7. Government licensing would pose a grave threat to constitutional freedom:					
Practitioners	26.6	42.4	13.7	15.8	1.4
Educators	45.8	22.5	10.0	9.2	12.5

TOTAL NUMBER:
Practitioners - 143 Respondents
Educators - 121 Respondents

disagreed, indicating that practitioners are divided on the topic of mandatory accreditation.

The fifth item in this section read as follows: Certification of public relations is essential to the professional development of the field. This statement was also somewhat divided, with 13.6 percent who strongly agreed, 32.1 percent agreed, 20.7 percent were undecided, 25.7 percent disagreed, and 7.9 percent strongly disagreed.

The sixth statement read: Certification of public relations is essential as a protection of the public interest. Only 8.5 percent of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, with 18.4 percent agreeing. A large percentage (28.4 percent) were undecided on this statement, with 31.9 percent who disagreed, and 12.8 percent who strongly disagreed.

The seventh statement in this section read as follows: Government licensing of public relations would pose a grave threat to constitutional freedom. The answers on this statement were skewed toward the positive, with 69.0 percent who either strongly agreed or agreed, and only 17.2 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The last question asked respondents who they thought should license public relations practitioners. Only 2.2 percent of respondents preferred the federal government, and 2.2 percent favored the state government. The largest percentage (87.8) said licensing should be done by a professional organization, and 7.8 percent marked "other." Fifty-three of the respondents did not answer this question.

Slightly less than half (45.3 percent) of the respondents were male, while 54.7 percent were female. Table 2 displays the demographic profile of the respondents. Table 3 displays the educational characteristics of the respondents.

Results: Educator Survey

A total of 210 questionnaires were mailed to educator members of the AEJMC Public Relations Division, the PRSA Educators Section and the IABC Educators' Academy. Two of the questionnaires were undeliverable, resulting in a usable sample of 208. Of these, 121 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 58.2 percent for the second survey.

As in the practitioner survey, respondents were given seven statements concerning the professional credentials of public relations practitioners and were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert-type scale. (Refer to Table 1 for Attitudes)

In response to the statement, public relations practitioners should be licensed by the government, 81 percent of the educator respondents disagreed (20.7 percent) or strongly disagreed (60.3 percent). A total of 13.3 percent agreed (8.3 percent) or strongly agreed (5 percent) with this statement.

A total of 73.6 percent of the educators participating in the study disagreed (30.6 percent) or strongly disagreed (43 percent) with the statement, licensing of public relations practitioners is inevitable. Only 9.1 percent agreed (5 percent) or strongly agreed (4.1 percent) that licensing was inevitable.

For the next statement, an alternative form of certification of public relations would be preferable to government licensure, a

TABLE 2

PRACTITIONERS' DEMOGRAPHICS

	Frequency	Percentage
SEX		
Male	63	45.3
Female	76	54.7
	N = 139	
AGE		
21-25 years	2	1.4
26-30	15	10.5
31-35	35	24.5
36-40	25	17.5
41-50	29	20.3
51-60	22	15.4
61 plus	10	7.0
	N = 138	
INCOME		
10,000 or less	4	2.9
10,001 - 15,000	2	1.4
15,001 - 20,000	7	5.1
20,001 - 25,000	9	6.5
25,001 - 30,000	8	5.8
30,001 - 35,000	32	23.2
35,001 - 40,000	17	12.3
40,001 - 45,000	16	11.6
45,001 - 50,000	11	8.0
50,001 -100,000	30	21.7
100,001 plus	2	1.4
	N = 138	

TABLE 3

PRACTITIONERS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

	Frequency	Percentage
Some College	7	4.9
Associate Art Degree	2	1.4
Bachelor's Degree	85	59.4
Master's Degree	45	31.5
Other	4	2.8
	N = 143	
Bachelor's Degree Major:		
Journalism/Mass Communication	66	46.2
Public Relations	7	4.9
Other	23	16.1
	N = 49	
Master's Degree Major:		
Journalism/Mass Communication	21	42.9
Public Relations	5	10.2
Other	23	46.9
	N = 49	
College Courses Taken For Credit:		
Public Relations		
None	57	39.9
One - Two	36	25.2
Three - Four	17	11.9
Four Plus	21	14.7
	N = 131	
Journalism		
None	17	12.5
One - Two	13	9.6
Three - Four	12	8.8
Five - Six	10	7.4
Seven - Eight	20	14.7
Eight Plus	64	47.1
	N = 136	

total of 73.7 percent of the 118 educators responding to this item agreed (36.4 percent) or strongly agreed (37.3 percent). Just over 14 percent disagreed (6.8 percent) or strongly disagreed (7.6 percent). Nearly 12 percent were undecided on this topic.

In response to the statement, professional accreditation of public relations practitioners should be mandatory, 49.5 percent of the educators disagreed (23.1 percent) or strongly disagreed (26.4 percent), while 33.1 percent agreed (18.2 percent) or strongly agreed (14.9 percent). More than 17 percent were undecided about this statement.

The educators were evenly divided on the fifth statement, certification of public relations is essential to the professional development of the field. A total of 42.2 percent agreed (21.5 percent) or strongly agreed (20.7 percent), while 42.1 percent disagreed (26.4 percent) or strongly disagreed (15.7 percent). There were 15.7 percent who were undecided on this question.

Item six stated: Certification of public relations is essential as a protection to the public interest. There was 48.7 percent disagreement (28.9 percent) or strong disagreement (19.8 percent). A total of 38 percent agreed (20.7 percent) or strongly agreed (17.4 percent), and 13.2 percent were undecided.

The last Likert scale statement read: Government licensing of public relations would pose a grave threat to constitutional freedom. The majority of the respondents (68.3 percent) agreed (22.5 percent), or strongly agreed (45.8 percent). Ten percent were undecided.

The final question in the educator survey, slightly reworded from the practitioner survey, asked the respondents to indicate their preference for state government, professional organization/council or "other," if licensing is conducted for public relations practitioners. The majority, 70.9 percent indicated a preference for licensing by a professional organization/council. Only 10.3 percent preferred state government licensing. Another 18.8 percent listed other preferences.

A selection of those "other" responses are: 27.3 percent replied no licensing at all; 27.3 percent suggested state board of professionals, professional council under state law or a combination of state government and professionals; 22.7 percent suggested academia or a combination of practitioner-educator organizations. Other suggestions were the House Un-American Activities Committee, an independent body, and the federal government.

The first part of the second survey asked several demographic, teaching and membership questions. (See Table 4)

Most of the educators surveyed (90.1 percent) were full-time faculty members. The mean full-time teaching experience of the respondents was 10.6 years. The mean full-time experience as a practitioner in the field of public relations reported in the survey was 10 years. Seventy-six percent of the respondents were males and 24 percent were females.

Summary and Conclusion

Recently increased interest in the benefits and status of professionalism for public relations practitioners has brought with

TABLE 4

EDUCATORS' PROFILE

	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching Background:		
Full-time Faculty Member	109	90.1
Part-time Faculty Member	8	6.6
Other	4	3.3
	N = 121	
Membership		
PRSA	71	58.7
IABC	41	33.9
AEJMC	88	72.7
Other	53	43.8
Accreditation:		
PRSA	41	33.9
IABC	5	4.1
Other	6	5.0
Non-Accredited	63	52.1
Sex:		
Male	92	76.0
Female	29	24.0

it renewed discussion of the pros and cons of licensing and related accreditation or certification issues.

Although the professional literature suggests that selected practitioners and educators hold adamant and highly polarized views on the perceived benefits and problems of licensure and related professional accreditation and certification, curiously little opinion research has been conducted among the more than 25,000 members of PRSA and IABC.

The current research reports the results of two surveys designed to determine the attitudes of both public relations practitioners and educators. A mail questionnaire, including seven Likert-type items on licensing and accreditation, was administered to a sample of 400 members of PRSA and IABC in the Fall of 1984. A second survey was mailed to a sample of 210 United States and Canadian members of the AEJMC Public Relations Division, the PRSA Educators Section and the IABC Educators Academy in 1985.

The results from a total of 264 respondents suggest strong opposition to public relations licensure among both practitioners and educators. Only 2.9 percent of the practitioner respondents agreed with the key statement: public relations practitioners should be licensed by the government. None of the respondents strongly agreed. The majority (86.5 percent) disagreed (32.9 percent) or strongly disagreed (53.6 percent). Educator respondents in the second survey also indicated strong opposition to the key question. Eighty-one percent of the educators disagreed (20.7 percent) or strongly disagreed (60.3 percent) with the idea of government licensure of public relations practitioners.

REFERENCES

Angel, Juvenal L. (1970). Directory of Professional and Occupational Licensing in the United States. New York: World Trade Academy Press.

Babbie, Earl R. (1983). The practice of social research. (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc.

Bailey, John. (1984). An Interview: John Bailey Reflects on His Years With IABC. Communication World, 1, (November), 11.

Berger, Tisdall, Clark and Lesly (1975). Memorandum about article, Subscribers vote for professionalization but no licensing, in pr reporter, 25 (March) 1974.

Bernays, Edward L. (1977). The argument for state registration and licensing for public relations. pr reporter, (Tips and Tactics), 15, (March). Reprinted October 21, 1985.

Bernays, Edward L. (1979). The case for licensing and registration for public relations. Public Relations Quarterly, 24, (Fall), 26-28.

Bernays, Edward L. (1983). The case for licensing PR practitioners. Public Relations Quarterly, 28 (Spring), 32.

Bernays, Edward L. (1984). The profession of public relations. Public Relations Quarterly, 29, (Spring), 4.

Bernays & colleagues start move for licensing of practitioners. (1985, September 9), pr reporter, 28, p. 2.

Communications Technology Task Force computer survey. (1985, November 25). pr reporter, 28, p.1.

Conversation with Edward L. Bernays and Edward L. Bernays and Edward M. Block. (1983, October 10). Pr News, Special Report No. 1840.

The Credentials of public relations: Licensing? Certification? Accreditation? A symposium in print. (1984, Summer) Public Relations Quarterly, pp. 9-27.

Cutlip, Scott M., Center, Allen H. & Broom, Glen. (1985). Effective Public Relations. (6th ed.) Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Cutlip, Scott M. (1985). Pros & cons of professional licensing: here's what you're telling pr reporter. pr reporter (Tips & Tactics), 23 (December).

Friendly, Jonathan (1984, June 24). Licensing of Latin journalists gives rise to growing fears. The New York Times, p. 1.

Griswold, Denny (1985, November 25). PR News, 41.

Grunig, James E. & Hunt, Todd (1984). Managing public relations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Hammonds, Leslie S. (1985). Professional development needs analysis of contemporary public relations practitioners. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Georgia.

Kersh, Jacqueline D. (1983). Would licensing increase the professionalism of public relations. Unpublished paper.

Lavick, Neil A. (1975). Public relations council: an alternative to licensing? Public Relations Quarterly, 20, (Spring), 18-22.

Lesly, Philip (1979). Licensing: Asking for shackles. Selections from Managing the Human Climate. Chicago: The Philip Lesly Co.

Multiple efforts underway now to varify or enforce professionalism. (1985, November 25). pr reporter 28, 3.

Nolte, Lawrence W. (1980). Let's forget licensing. Public Relations Quarterly, 25, (Summer), 14-15.

PRSA news brief national board report (1986). Public Relations Journal, 42 (March), 1.

Report and recommendations of the task force on stature and role of public relations. IPRA Review, 5 (2), 18-30.

Scott, Alan (1980). Licensing for public relations practitioners. IPRA Review, 4, (September), 7-10.

Smith, Rea (1973). Licensing. Excerpts from letter written as vice president, Public Relations Society of America.

Stempel, Guido H. & Westley, Bruce H (Eds.). (1981). Research methods in mass communication. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Tennant, Frank A. (1978). Survey on licensing public relations practitioners. Public Relations Review, 4, (Spring), 37-42.

Werka, Pierre (1975). The pros and cons of licensing. Public Relations Journal, 31, (January), 23-24.

Wright, J. Handly (1973). Licensing - Pro and Con. a memorandum to Betsy Ann Plank.

Wright, J. Handly (1977). The argument against licensing of public relations practitioners. pr reporter, (Tips & Tactics), 15, (March). Reprinted November 18, 1985.